



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO HIS HOLINESS MAR DINKHA IV
CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST**

Thursday, 2 October 2014

Your Holiness, Beloved Brothers in Christ,

It is a moment of grace and true joy for me to be able to welcome you here, at the Tomb of the Apostle Peter. With affection I welcome Your Holiness and I thank you for the courteous words you addressed to me also on behalf of the distinguished members of your Delegation. Through you, I express my greeting in the Lord to the Bishops, the clergy and the faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East. With the words of the Apostle Paul, I pray that “the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7).

Our meeting is marked by the suffering that we share for the conflicts which are passing through various regions of the Middle East and especially for the violence which is striking Christians and those belonging to other religious minorities, especially in Iraq and Syria. How many of our brothers and sisters are suffering from daily persecution! When we think of their suffering, it is natural to move beyond any distinction of rite or confession: in them it is the Body of Christ, which, still today, is being wounded, struck, humiliated. There is no religious, political or economic reason that can justify what is happening to hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children. We feel deeply united in intercessory prayer and in the work of charity for these members of the Body of Christ who are suffering.

Your Holiness, your visit is another step on the path of growing closeness and spiritual communion between us, after the bitter misunderstandings of past centuries. Twenty years ago, the Common Christological Declaration signed by you and by my Predecessor, Pope St John Paul II, was a milestone on our path toward full communion. By it we acknowledged to confess the one faith of the Apostles, the faith in the divinity and humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, united in one person,

without confusion or change, without division or separation. To use the words of that historic Document: united, we confess “the same faith in the Son of God who became man so that we might become children of God by his grace”. I wish to assure you of my personal commitment to continue the journey along this path, further deepening the relationships of friendship and of communion which exist between the Church of Rome and the Assyrian Church of the East.

I accompany with prayer the work of the Joint Committee for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, thanks to which the blessed day is approaching, on which we will be able to celebrate at the same altar the sacrifice of praise, which will make us one in Christ. Until that day, let us feel we are walking together in the presence of the Lord, as Our Father Abraham did on his pilgrimage of faith toward the Promised Land, knowing that, although the destination seems distant and we may taste it only in hope, it is however the gift promised by the Lord and, therefore, it will not fail to become manifest. What unites is much greater than what divides us; thus may we feel impelled by the Spirit to exchange, from now on, the spiritual treasures of our ecclesial Traditions, in order to live as true brothers, sharing the gifts that the Lord does not cease to bestow on our Churches, as a sign of his goodness and mercy.

Your Holiness, I thank you for your visit and I invoke upon you, your clergy and the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care, through the intercession of the All Holy Mother of God, an abundance of divine blessings.